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1. Introduction.

Throughout this paper we will assume that all rings are commutative rings with identity, that ring homomorphisms preserve identities, and that a ring and its subrings have the same identity. We say that a ring is connected if it has exactly two idempotents. By a local ring we mean a (not necessarily Noetherian) ring with a unique maximal ideal. For the remainder of this paper we assume that R is a local ring with maximal ideal M.

In this paper we give a definition of a weakly Henselian ring. The main result of this paper is Theorem 1.5. In this theorem we give a characterization of weakly Henselian rings. A version of this Theorem appears as Theorem 4.15 on page 176 of [5]. But in [5] the author assumes that the residue class field of R is infinite. In this paper we have no such restriction.

2. Weakly Henselian Rings.

If S is a connected ring and $f \in S[x]$ then f is said to be a separable polynomial if f is monic and there exist $u, v \in S[x]$ such that $uf + vf' = 1$ where f' is the formal derivative of f.

Definition 1.1. We say that R is a weakly Henselian ring if whenever $f \in R[x]$ is a separable polynomial and there exist monic polynomials $g_0, h_0 \in (R/M)[x]$ with $\overline{f} = g_0 h_0$ then there exist monic polynomials $g, h \in R[x]$ such that $f = gh, \overline{g} = g_0$, and $\overline{h} = h_0$

Note that since f is separable the polynomials g, h, g_0, and h_0 in Definition 1.1 are also separable by Lemma 1.2 on page 22 of [2]. By the same lemma there exist $u, v \in R[x]$ and $u_0, v_0 \in (R/M)[x]$ such that $ug + vh = 1$ and $u_0 g_0 + v_0 h_0 = 1$.

If S is a ring and $f \in S[x]$ we write $deg(f)$ for the degree of f. If f is a monic polynomial then we say that f is indecomposable if whenever there exist monic polynomials $g, h \in S[x]$ such that $f = gh$ it follows that

$g = 1$ or $h = 1$. If T is a finite projective separable extension of S and P is a maximal ideal of T then $Q = P \cap S$ is a maximal ideal of S since T is an integral extension of S. We call the degree of the field T/P over S/Q the inertial degree of P over Q.

The next lemma is Theorem 3.5 on page 172 of [5]. We include it for the convenience of the reader.

Lemma 1.2. *If S is a connected ring , f is an indecomposable separable polynomial in $S[x]$, Q is a maximal ideal of S, and $f_1, \ldots, f_n$ are monic polynomials in $S[x]$ such that $\overline{f} = \overline{f}_1 \cdot \ldots \cdot \overline{f}_n$ is the unique factorization of $\overline{f}$ in S/Q, and $T = S[x]/(f)$ then:*

(i) *The maximal ideals in T which lie over Q are precisely the ideals of the form $P_i = Q \cdot T + (f_i + (f)) \cdot T$;*

(ii) *The inertial degree of P_i over Q equals the $deg(f_i)$.*

If $F \subseteq L$ is an extension of fields we let $deg(L : F)$ denote the degree of L over F. In order to prove the main result in this section we need the following technical lemma regarding the existence of irreducible polynomials over finite fields.

Lemma 1.3. *Let F be a finite field with q elements, $F \subseteq L$ be an extension of finite fields, and M be a positive integer. There exists a monic polynomial $g \in F[x]$ such that:*

(i) *g is irreducible in $L[x]$;*

(ii) *there exist at least M distinct monic irreducible polynomials in $F[x]$ of degree $deg(g) \cdot deg(L : F)$.*

Proof : Let n be a positive integer, and let $N_q(n)$ denote the number of irreducible polynomials in $F[x]$ of degree n. By Example 3.26 on page 86 of [4]

$$N_q(i) \geq (1/i)(q^i - q^{i-1} - q^{i-2} - \ldots - q).$$

Thus

$$\lim_{i \to \infty} N_q(i) = \infty.$$

So we may choose a positive integer M_0 such that whenever $i > M_0$ it follows that $N_q(i) > M$.

Let j be positive integer such that $j > M_0$ and j is relatively prime to $deg(L : F)$. Since $j > M_0$ there exists a monic irreducible polynomial g in

$F[x]$ of degree j. By Corollary 3.47 on page 100 of [4], the fact that j and $deg(L : F)$ are relatively prime implies g is irreducible over L. Also, since $j \cdot deg(L : F) > M_0$ it follows that $N_q(j \cdot deg(L : F)) > M$. This completes the proof.

If S is a connected ring we let Ω_S denote the separable closure of R. If T is a ring extension of R we say that T has a primitive element over S if there exists $\alpha \in T$ such that $T = R[\alpha]$

Lemma 1.4. *Assume that R/M is a finite field and Ω_R is not a local ring. Then there exists a separable indecomposable polynomial $f \in R[x]$ such that $\overline{f}$ is not irreducible in $(R/M)[x]$.*

Proof : Since Ω_R is not local there exists a finite projective connected Galois extension S of R such that S is not a local ring. Let $Q_1, \dots, Q_n$ be the distinct maximal ideals of S. By Lemma 1.3 there exists a monic irreducible polynomial $g_0 \in (R/M)[x]$ such that:

(i) g_0 is irreducible in S/Q_1;

(ii) There exist at least n distinct irreducible polynomials in $(R/M)[x]$ of degree $deg(g_0) \cdot deg(S/Q_1 : R/M)$.

Let $g \in R[x]$ be monic such that $\overline{g} = g_0$ in $(R/M)[x]$. Note that g is separable in R[x] since $\overline{g}$ is separable in $(R/M)[x]$. Also, g is indecomposable in $S[x]$ since g is irreducible in $(S/Q_1)[x]$. Thus $T = S[x]/(g)$ is a finite projective separable connected extension of S.

Since S is Galois over R, Lemma 2.2 on page 167 of [5] implies that

$$deg(S/Q_1 : R/M) = deg(S/Q_j : R/M), \forall j \in \{1, \dots, n\}.$$

So by Corollary 3.47 on page 100 of [4], $\overline{g}$ is irreducible in $(S/Q_j)[x]$ for all $j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$. Thus by Lemma 1.2, T has exactly one maximal ideal P_j which lies over Q_j for all $j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$. Further the inertial degree of P_j over Q_j equals $deg(g)$ for all $j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$. Hence

$$T/(MT) \simeq T/P_1 \times \dots \times T/P_n,$$

the inertial degree of Q_j over M equals $deg(g_0) \cdot deg(S/Q_1 : R/M)$ for all $j \in \{1, \dots, n\}$, and there are at least n irreducible polynomials of degree $deg(g_0) \cdot deg(S/Q_1 : R/M)$ in $(R/M)[x]$. Let $h_1, \dots, h_n$ be n distinct polynomials in $(R/M)[x]$ each of degree equal to the inertial degree of Q_1 over

M. Then

$$T/P_1 \times \ldots \times T/P_n \simeq (R/M)[x]/(h_1) \times \ldots \times (R/M)[x]/(h_n).$$

Also,

$$(R/M)[x]/(h_1) \times \ldots \times (R/M)[x]/(h_n) \simeq (R/M)[x]/(h_1 \cdot \ldots \cdot h_n)$$

since $h_1 \ldots h_n$ are pairwise relatively prime. A standard argument now shows that $T/(M \cdot T)$ has a primitive element over R. Using this fact and an application of Nakayama's Lemma one can show that T has a primitive element over R. So by Theorem 3.3 page 171 of [5] there exists an indecomposable separable polynomial $h \in R[x]$ such that $T \simeq R[x]/(h)$ and by Lemma 1.2 h is not irreducible in $(R/M)[x]$. This completes the proof.

We can now prove the main result in this paper.

Theorem 1.5. *R is weakly Henselian if and only if Ω_R is a local ring.*

Proof : If R/M is an infinite field then the theorem follows from Theorem 4.15 on page 176 of [5]. Thus we assume that R/M is finite. If Ω_R is not local then by Lemma 1.4 R is not weakly Henselian. If R is not weakly Henselian then by Lemma 1.2 there exists a finite projective separable extension of R which is not local. Thus Ω_R is not local. This completes the proof.

Corollary 1.6. Henselian local rings have local separable closures.

Proof : This is clear.

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